

# Letter from the Director



It is with great pleasure we present the 2019-2020 Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources Department Annual Report highlighting our many significant accomplishments over the past year.

Planning and implementation continued to move forward on capital and bond projects. Please visit our website at https://www.raleighnc.gov/parks and search "current projects" to follow the progress.

- □ Dorothea Dix Park's "Phase Now" projects kicked off with a \$10 million pledge over the next 3 years from the Dix Park Conservancy that will allow us to begin work on early park improvements.
- ☐ In September, we broke ground on the **John Chavis Memorial Park renovation project** –

  this renovation includes restoration of the original carousel house which honors the park's long history and significance.
- Moore Square was officially re-opened in August and since then we've invited the Raleigh community to visit for live music, fitness programs, street festivals, and educational programs.

- ☐ Invasive Species staff launched their **Habitat Heroes program**, which allows individuals and groups to adopt one of our 220 parks or a section of our 120 miles of greenway trails.
- Our financial assistance program, **Play it Forward**, provided assistance to 660 Families
  which is an increase of 100 families over last year!

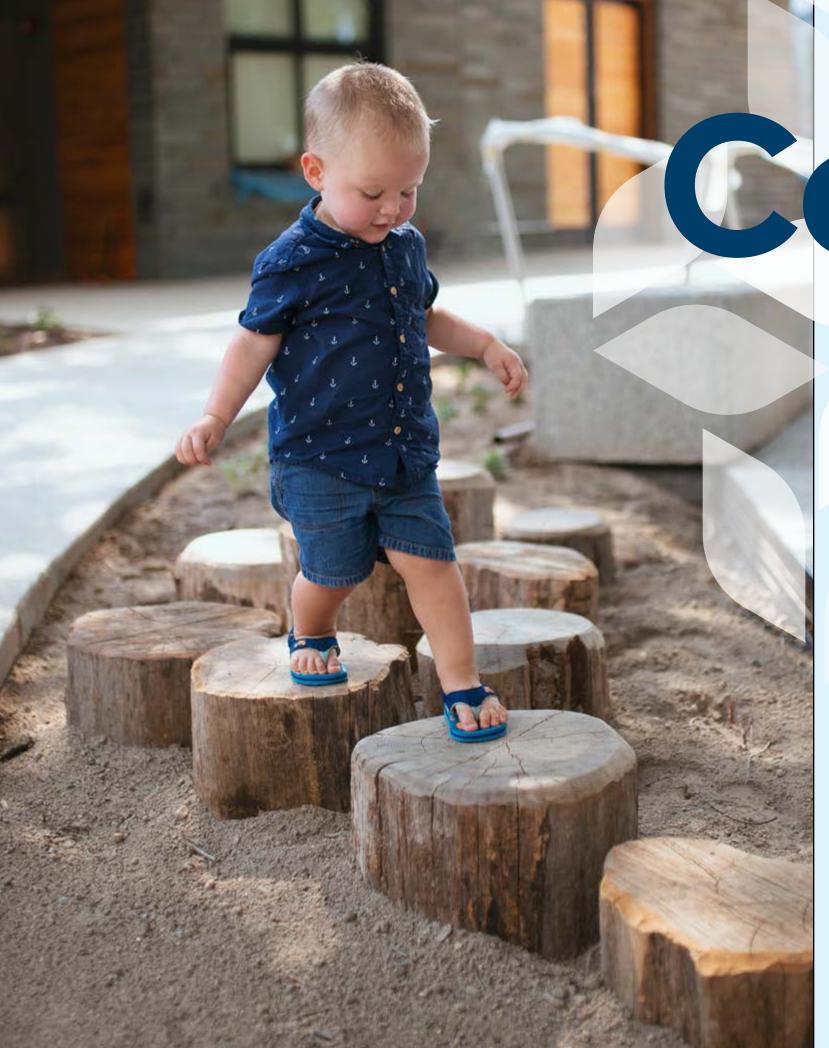
We will continue to work hard to provide a model parks system for all citizens and visitors of Raleigh to enjoy and be proud of. We are committed to maintaining our parks and facilities in a clean and safe manner, to preserving and protecting our natural environment, to looking into Raleigh's unique culture at our museum and historic sites and providing the highest quality recreation opportunities for citizens of every age and ability.

In closing, I would like to sincerely thank City Council and the citizens of Raleigh whose continued and unwavering support make these accomplishments possible.

Sincerely,

Oscar Carmona, CPRE, Director

Together we connect and enrich our community through exceptional experiences.



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# **Park Projects**

# **Phase Now**

The Dix Park Conservancy pledged \$10 million over the next three years for Phase Now to kick-start projects at the park. This Phase Now includes funding the renovation of the All Faiths Chapel to create the first indoor public gathering space for the community at Dix Park; the design of The Gateway – the iconic welcome plaza and one-of-a-kind play space along Lake Wheeler Rd; and some Early Park Improvements like directional signage, benches, and picnic shelters.

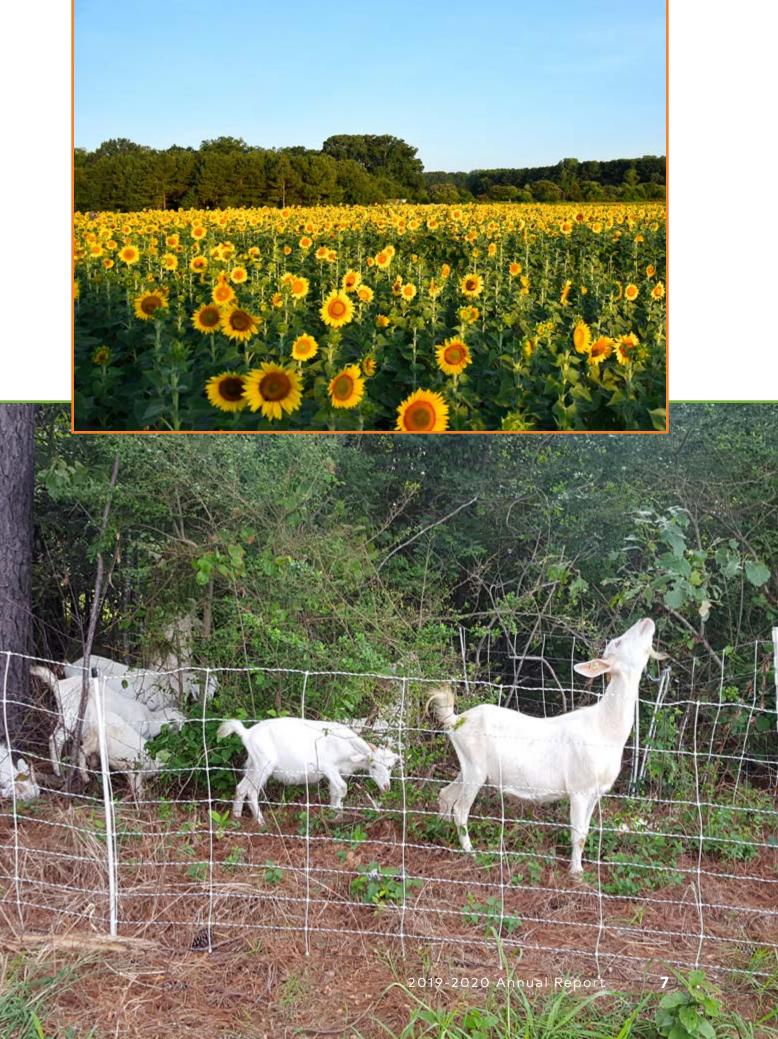


## **Sunflowers Return**

Since this enchanting field of sunflowers debuted last summer, the Raleigh community and beyond have been anticipating the return of this special sight. The 5-acre sunflower field was planted and after a slow start due heat and dry conditions, once again the blooms drew thousands of people to Dix Park. After the bloom was over, Raleigh Water harvested the sunflower seeds to process biofuel.

#### **Goats**

A herd of 20 goats helped clear two acres of vegetation out of a pine grove on the Big Field. This initiative is a new sustainable and cost-effective way for our Raleigh Parks maintenance team to manage vegetation in the park. As part of the ongoing effort at Dix Park to open up and activate the park grounds, clearing overgrown areas is needed to not only make the park look nicer, but also improve visibility and safety for park visitors.



# Park Projects (cont.)

## **Destination SunFest**

25,000 people from across the city, county and beyond joined us at our summer festival. Destination SunFest was a celebration of the completed Master Plan for Dorothea Dix Park and welcomed the community to enjoy our amazing sunflower field. Families enjoyed the Ferris wheel, carousel, live music and roving entertainment, along with local vendors and fun activities for kids and adults!

# **Falling for Local**

Partnering with Shop Local Raleigh, Dix Park hosted a fall festival and market with over 100 local makers and independent vendors and two dozen local craft breweries. Boasting a free pumpkin patch, hayrides, kids' activities, live music and more, Falling for Local drew a crowd of 15,000 community members to celebrate autumn in Raleigh!

# **Yoga and Wellness**

From March through October, Yoga in the Park is a favorite activity for folks at Dix Park. Welcoming all fitness levels, this free outdoor yoga class draws upwards of 100 people each week. With the COVID-19 pandemic reaching Wake County in March, park programs and events were suspended for the rest of the spring. To continue providing our community with the benefits of our fitness and wellness programs, Dix Park created a series of virtual classes for people to practice at home. Virtual Wellness with Dix Park includes free Yoga, Tai Chi, and Guided Meditation practices.



# Park Projects (cont.)

On September 6, 2019, the City of Raleigh broke ground on the John Chavis Memorial Park renovation project. The park will reopen to serve the community with a brand new 30,000 sq. ft. community center, new interactive plaza & play area, renovation of the original carousel house that can be used for community gatherings and first phase of historical interpretation on the significance of John Chavis and the park. We are excited to honor the parks vision, "a vibrant community center, downtown attraction, and regional destination. The park celebrates the rich history, culture and arts of the surrounding neighborhoods and the City of Raleigh, and offers wonderful public recreation opportunities, event spaces, and programs that foster community life.





# John Chavis



# Memorial Park Groundbreaking



# Park Projects (cont.)

Major renovation of Kiwanis Park was completed and features amenities including a new neighborhood center, new playground, basketball court, picnic shelter, and dog run. The generous donation from the Kiwanis Club of Raleigh contributed to the implementation of the new playground and basketball court.

# Kiwanis **Park**





Neighborhood Center renovations were completed at Powell Drive Park, Eastgate Park and Ralph Campbell Neighborhood **Center at Apollo Heights Park**. Exterior accessible restrooms were incorporated in the Powell Drive Park Neighborhood Center scope as requested by the community.

The playgrounds at North Hills Park and Spring Forest Road Park were rebuilt with research-based play structures. Both projects were partially funded through the North Carolina Recreation and Park Association's (NCRPA) Healthy Play and Recreation Initiative. The playgrounds have been designated as National Demonstration Sites for data collection and will contribute data to highlight best practices and outcomes achieved in early childhood development.

### **Awards:**

- ☐ Horseshoe Farm Nature Preserve General Design, American Society of Landscape Architects Merit Award
- ☐ Walnut Creek Wetland Park Master Plan Analysis and Planning, American Society of Landscape Architects Merit Award
- ☐ Thomas G. Crowder Woodland Center at Lake Johnson, Sir Walter Raleigh Award for Community Appearance, public facilities category.

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Volunteers of all ages and backgrounds are contributing their time, talent and resources to make a difference in our community. Parks and cultural offerings across our City are made stronger by the spirited involvement of individuals, corporate groups, schools and community organizations. Volunteers assist with park maintenance, coach athletic teams, support at special events and keep our greenway trails clean and safe through the Adopt-A-Trail program.

Over the past year, nearly 16,000 volunteers gave more than 140,000 hours of service within the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources department. These volunteer hours amount to a value of \$3.4 million across more than 2,700 events.



# Contributions Contributions



Time outdoors, fresh air, and social interaction have never been more important! Summer camp and outdoor nature play improve kids' physical and mental health as they build confidence and develop social skills. Our department has aligned with the City of Oaks Foundation to offer a program of financial assistance that allows kids to attend an active, outdoor, summer camp for free or at little cost.

The nonprofit foundation provided financial aid for almost 70 local youth aged 5-13 to participate in Raleigh's outdoor camps and nature programs in 2019.

The foundation has also partnered with local businesses to provide over \$35,000 for teen programs and summer youth employment through the City of Raleigh, and over \$10,000 for other youth development programs like the Neighborhood Ecology Corps.

The foundation promotes local environmental conservation, so that everyone can experience our parks, greenways, nature preserves, farms and community gardens. The foundation has donated acres of land to Raleigh for parks and greenspace and is working right now to transform their beautiful Joslin Garden property into a future public garden and park. In the past year the organization has:

- ☐ Hosted three Open Garden Days in the beautiful Joslin Garden, as well as an Easter Egg Hunt, and independent short film premiers, and a special Mother's Day Tea at the Joslin House in the spring;
- ☐ Hosted art classes, field trips for school groups and seniors, and a special neighborhood Halloween event featuring live owls, bats, and other creepy creatures to benefit local animal rescue groups at Joslin Garden;
- ☐ Facilitated the fundraising efforts for local volunteer groups aligned with the Raleigh's parks, such as the Friends of Millbrook Dog Park and the Raleigh Riders program, which is providing assisted biking through local parks, as well as accepted numerous private donations for local park improvements and volunteer projects;
- ☐ Supported numerous programs around the city dedicated to getting youth and adults outside, active, and connected to nature.





Business Process
Mangement
\$2,720,699

5%

Park Development & Communications \$3,361,687

6%

Natural & Cultural Resources \$10,100,977

18%

Parks/Grounds
Maintenance
\$18,088,810

33%

Recreation \$20,733,702

38%

The PRCR Department's 2019-2020 operating budget is \$55,005,875.

The Department's Capital Improvement Budget for FY20 is \$13M and includes \$7.8M for 2014 bond projects.

# **Play It Forward**

The City of Raleigh Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources Department strives to ensure that no one is denied the benefits of public recreation due to the inability to pay. In 2019-2020: 600 families were assisted, with the Amount of Awards totaling \$215,818.



summer campaign, Turtle Treks, was launched to encourage people to explore the Raleigh Parks system and visit new parks and trails. As part of Turtle Treks, patrons snapped pictures of their turtle adventures at local parks and then shared those photos on social media. The campaign garnered **18,987** total impressions over the summer.



**Programs and Initiatives** (cont.)

# Summer Service **Program**

Continued funding to support the delivery of summer camp programs for over 15,000 registrants in a ten-week period. PRCR will serve nearly **50,000** meals as part of the Summer Food Service Program at 17 summer camp program locations. The Summer Food Service Program is a federally-funded stateadministered program that reimburses providers that serve no-cost, healthy meals to children and teens (ages 18 and younger) in low-income areas when school is not in session.



# -Orward

Continued support of the community by increasing the financial assistance award amount from \$163,094 to \$215,818 thus increasing the number of families that are able to receive assistance to 660 families which is an increase of 100 families from the prior year for school programs, summer camps and other programs. The financial assistance program continues to grow as the department partners with various agencies across the community. One of the many major accomplishments this year was a grant received from the Kaleidoscope Project that will allow children experiencing homelessness to engage in a week of nature camp. Overall funding for this program comes from donations from the community and a small percentage of vending sales.



# **Satisfaction Surveys**

Raleigh residents who participate in online surveys help us learn whether we are meeting their needs. Their evaluation let us know whether we are providing the exceptional experiences they expect. Over the past year, we received about 7,200 completed surveys from our program participants. Overall, their satisfaction rating was 4.5 out of 5.0.

# **Get Social with Raleigh Parks**

Get Social with Raleigh Parks: the department embraces social media to keep members of the community engaged and to help us stay informed about what matters to them. We look at social media as a customer service tool, allowing us to interact with citizens, receive feedback and share information.

Our online social media community has grown to **99,237** members.

**16,885** Twitter followers

13,639 Facebook page likes

**421** Pinterest followers

**60,456** Youtube views

7,836 Instagram followers

# Join the conversation

Have a question about the parks? Ask us.

Have a shoutout about something fun in the parks? Tell us.

- f Facebook.com/raleighparks
- ▼ Twitter.com/raleighparks
- Instagram.com/raleighparks
- Pinterest.com/raleighparks



# Raleigh City Council\*

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Patrick Buffkin
David Cox
David Knight
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Carol Ashcraft
Patrick Buffkin
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Kendall Harris
Dexter Hebert
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Marsha Presnell Jennette

Carol Love Clodagh Lyons-Bastian

David Millsaps Dave Toms

Charles Townsend

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Natalie Bullock Brown
David Clegg
Jamie Dawson

Jamie Dawson
Courtney Greer
Pam Hartley
Bain Jones
Judy Payne
Angela Salamanca

Angela Salamanca Patty Williams Shelley Smith

### **Management Team**

**Director:** Oscar Carmona **Assistant Director:**Scott Payne

**Assistant Director:** Ken Hisler

Stephen Bentley **Assistant Director:** 

**Assistant Director:** 

Sally Thigpen

Administration

Superintendent:

Helene McCullough

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<sup>\*</sup>at time of printing

